

GERMAN ANTI-SEMITISM TODAY

BY RICHARD HANSER

WHEN American troops moved into Frankfurt-am-Main in March of 1945, some of them who could read German were amused to read an inscription scrawled on a bomb-shattered wall in the center of the city. It read:

"Hitler ist ein Jude!"

Here, it seemed, was the dementia of anti-Semitism carried to its ultimate absurdity. *"Hitler is a Jew!"* Some despairing German had written the sentence in an eleventh-hour outpouring of bitterness against the leader who had taught him that *Jude* was the vilest insult in all the language. Events had reduced the ponderous structure of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* to gabble.

In those months of our victory the National Socialist use of racial hatred as an instrument of policy and an implement of propaganda seemed irretrievably bankrupt, buried with the corpses of its victims under uncounted tons of rubble, bombed and burned out of existence like the Third Reich itself. Never before had a people been given such a shattering object lesson

in the consequences of a system based on persecution and oppression.

Today, however, there is a vast amount of evidence to indicate that the lesson, overwhelming as it was, has not been learned. As the occupation of Germany approaches the end of its third year, anti-Semitism is everywhere resurgent and often openly violent. The democratization of Germany, a prime objective of the vast expenditure of occupation money and manpower, cannot be regarded as otherwise than a total failure as long as anti-Semitism contaminates and corrupts the majority of Germans. The facts show that anti-Semitism, far from having been eliminated or reduced by the occupation, is alarmingly on the increase.

In 1945 and 1946 American Military Government made careful surveys of the state of anti-Semitism in our zone. The 1946 survey showed a definite increase over the previous year. A more elaborate report completed in 1947 now reveals that the situation is such that less than 2 Germans in every 10 can be relied upon

RICHARD HANSER is now working as a staff writer for RKO Pathé, where he wrote the script for the documentary film, *Germany Today*. During the war he worked for the OWI as editor of a German-language paper which was dropped on Germany in American Flying Fortress raids. He has been contributing to a wide variety of national magazines.

to resist overt actions against the Jews. This is the statistical way of putting it. Actually, there have been anti-Semitic demonstrations where nobody, not even German officials who were present, made any resistance or protest.

"Anyone who imagines," the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* recently wrote, "that all Germans have by now recognized the road, the wrong road, that led to the mass killings, and that everyone hates that road and is ashamed of it, is very much mistaken. All that happened in the recent past is usually quietly forgotten, and it is no wonder that there is talk today of a new wave of anti-Semitism."

Not long ago Dr. Phillip Auerbach, commissioner for victims of racial, religious and political persecution, contributed an article to the *Donau-Kurier* in which he said: "Scenes take place in trains which are reminiscent of the worst days of the Third Reich. . . . In Berlin a Jewish citizen was pulled off the train and beaten up in the office of the station master. . . . In shops and restaurants the proprietors often refuse to serve Jews. . . . In the local cabaret at Bad Reichenhall somebody recited a jingle which went: 'The Jews are gobbling chocolate today. Only six million of them were gassed — too bad!' This was greeted with a storm of applause."

II

One of the clearest indications of the depth and prevalence of Germany's current anti-Semitism is the flood of

murderous vilification that pours through the mails whenever any effort is made to remind the Germans of their guilt in the slaughter of Jews. A mere warning over the Berlin radio against the revival of anti-Semitism was enough to bring hundreds of anonymous letters denouncing the Jews and threatening the life of the announcer. When the 4500 *Exodus* refugees were forcibly returned to Hamburg last September, the publishers of the *Wiesbadener Kurier* saw an opportunity for the Germans to demonstrate their "willingness to make good" in some small measure for the crimes committed against the Jewish people. The paper offered to contribute 28,000 marks to any Land, city, or village which would give "these victims of racial mania" a place to live, and the necessities of life. "We appeal to anybody who has preserved in his heart the ability to feel for the sufferings of others to join with us!" the paper wrote. Newspapers and radios throughout the American and British zones repeated the appeal.

The response, according to the United Press, was "a sullen wall of silence which would have satisfied Hitler and Goebbels." The silence was not quite complete, however. There *was* a response to the appeal. It consisted of a torrent of vituperative letters reeking of Nazi party-line propaganda.

Just outside of Berlin in the Soviet Zone is the little town of Kleinmachnow. The suburban train that runs

from there to Berlin without any stops between is continually defaced with obscene scribblings against Jews and the occupation authorities, and this is an accurate index to conditions that prevail in Kleinmachnow itself. Burglaries and other depredations committed there are usually the work of Red Army deserters, but an officially posted police announcement recently said:

Inhabitants of Kleinmachnow!

Do not let any UNRRA Jews into your houses during the day. It has been stated that Jews enter the houses during the day attempting to sell or buy something. On these occasions they spy out where they can break in. . . .

UNRRA Jews have no permission to enter the Russian Zone. Every citizen of Kleinmachnow must know where the nearest telephone is in order to call the police if he hears a suspicious noise.

Support the police and protect your property.

Signed, Baier, Police Chief.

The town administration, notorious for its pro-Nazi proclivities, recently imposed a 100 per cent rent raise on all victims of fascism living in Kleinmachnow. Some months ago the mayor and the head of the food administration were in a local café with two friends, a former SS man and an erstwhile Nazi Party member. At a nearby table was a Jewish DP named Mischka Czucker with a woman friend. The two officials and their friends, all drunk, began blurting out anti-Semitic abuse, and the mayor finally ordered the Jew from the café. Czucker protested that he was causing no disturbance and harming no one.

The mayor had him thrown out bodily by the police.

Czucker preferred charges and, after a delay of months, the two officials were brought to trial. They were acquitted on a legal technicality. A few weeks later Czucker's headless corpse was found in a woods.

III

There are half a million DPs in Austria, and only 30,000 are Jews. But it is the Jews who are singled out for blame and denunciation when public dissatisfaction with current conditions grows acute. Thus a protest meeting in Ischl against a breakdown in the milk supply was turned into an anti-Semitic demonstration when speakers, several of whom were officials of the community, began attacking the inhabitants of the *Goldenes Kreuz* Hotel, occupied solely by Jewish DPs. These attacks were met with riotous enthusiasm by the crowd of 200, which moved upon the hotel, began stoning it, shaking fists and shouting: "Down with the Jews!" and "Throw the Jews out!" and "Hang the Jews!" It was necessary for MG troops to disperse the demonstrators.

An American Military Court investigated the affair and imposed stiff sentences on the speakers, who were found guilty of inciting to riot. The sentences were subsequently reviewed and greatly reduced by the American High Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Keyes, who nevertheless sternly condemned the participants and emphasized that Austrian

officials present at the demonstration did nothing whatever to restrain it. Most significant, however, was the attitude of the Austrian press. With one accord, from extreme right to far left, the papers raised a hue and cry against the sentences, hotly defended the speakers, and did everything possible to minimize the demonstration as of no consequence. The Communist *Neues Oesterreich* of Vienna dismissed what was indisputably an anti-Semitic riot as *eine kleine Schreierei* — "a little shouting and yelling."

In such an atmosphere it is perhaps no wonder that the lapel pins issued to designate victims of Nazi oppression are no longer displayed because, far from bringing their wearers consideration, they invite abuse; that a monument erected in Berlin to commemorate Nazi crimes against Jews was wrecked almost as soon as it went up; that in Nuremberg anti-Semitic leaflets, expertly printed in four colors, have been widely distributed; that Jewish DP camps have been openly stoned and Jewish cemeteries desecrated; that Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner, after a tour of Germany, gave it as his opinion that if occupation troops were withdrawn tomorrow the Jewish DPs would leave the camps and scatter for their lives; and that Rabbi Phillip S. Bernstein, formerly advisor on Jewish affairs to the American Military Governor, has warned of the possibility of pogroms.

In a scientific sampling of the German public, based on more than 3000 interviews, the Opinion Survey Head-

quarters of American Military Government found that six out of every ten Germans in the American Zone are "deeply imbued" with anti-Semitic feelings. Eighteen per cent were found to be "rabid" anti-Semites, with the others either willing to condone overt action against the Jews or able to rationalize such action. The current resurgence of anti-Semitism, according to the MG survey, coincided with the revival of German nationalism. Both began to emerge when the population showed the first signs of recovery from the stunned apathy which followed defeat, and both increased with the amelioration of Military Government policy which shifted away from the "universal guilt" line to one of conciliating the Germans and jockeying for their favor against the Russians. The Germans, finding themselves allowed to speak out with comparative freedom, ceased their wary concealment of how they really felt about the Jews. Thus, in a recent public speech, the Bavarian Minister of Economics, Rudolph Zorn, did not hesitate to inflame popular prejudice by placing the blame for the omnipresent black market solely on the DPs. This was going a little too far, however, even for our excessively indulgent occupation authorities. It was necessary for General Lucius Clay, the Military Governor, to refute the slander and issue a harsh rebuke in a statement to the American Zone Council of German States.

The MG survey discovered that

anti-Semitism is much more pronounced among German women than among the men "even when other factors — e.g., education — are taken into account." Fraternization among our troops and German women is of course extensive and uninhibited, with the result that many Americans are contaminated by the racial hatred of the *Fräuleins* they consort with. This interplay of attitudes between troops and the population spreads the poison in ever-widening circles.

The blackness of the picture is deepened by the fact that Germany's renascent anti-Semitism cannot be ascribed simply to unregenerate Nazi and neo-Nazi elements; it extends even to sections of the population which are regarded as politically untainted. In an analysis of the situation written for the New York *Aufbau*, Dr. Samuel Gringauz, former president of the Congress of Liberated Jews in the United States Zone, reports that the Nazi underground is for the present avoiding overt anti-Semitic action. Most such actions and incidents, says Dr. Gringauz, have been traced to persons who are simply acting under the compulsion of elemental anti-Jewish prejudice. This is confirmed by the MG survey, which found that neither service in the *Wehrmacht* nor membership in the Nazi Party has much bearing on the prejudice felt. "Nor are the people who grew up under the Nazi régime much more prejudiced than are those who were adults when Hitler came to power," the survey states.

The basic causes for this state of affairs have been isolated by official and unofficial investigators. The causes include such obvious and time-worn explanations as the search for a scapegoat, someone to blame for the undeniably wretched plight of the Germans; and a deep-seated and often subconscious feeling of guilt which seeks assuagement in the conviction that the Jews deserved what they got. Added to these is a nostalgia for the good old Hitler days when everything was better, and a delusion that Jews are guiding our occupation with the intention of deliberately keeping Germany in subjection and misery. (This latter belief is not, of course, affected in the least by the fact that our policy includes the shipment of millions of tons of supplies into Germany.)

Very simply, there is still a blind and insensate compulsion on the part of tens of thousands of Germans to blame the Jews for everything — the lack of housing, the skimpy rations, the overfilled trains and street cars, the paralyzed economy, the catastrophic past and the black and hopeless future. The prototype of the present-day German has been described as "a sullen cynic who whines before his conquerors, shrugs at democracy and looks to another war as a possible solution for his present troubles."

IV

Various counter-measures have been proposed to eradicate this cancer whose continued growth threatens to

negate everything the occupation hopes to accomplish. It has been proposed to General Clay that anti-Semitism be made a crime punishable with rigid penalties. This has been rejected on the ground that it would only drive anti-Semitism underground and do nothing to improve the situation. General Clay favors a broad, rounded campaign of education and democracy which, if it could be made effective, would reduce anti-Semitism as a matter of course. To this end numerous projects have been launched, including an elaborate youth program, discussion clubs, radio programs, lectures, films, the dissemination of magazines, books and newspapers — in short, all the devices of persuasion and public information with which a democracy operates. But these efforts are scattered, fragmentary, often haphazard, sometimes contradictory. In none of them is anti-Semitism a specific target.

The outlook for any sweeping improvement within the foreseeable future is extremely gloomy. The MG survey itself holds out little encouragement. It says: "Possibly some reduction in anti-Semitism can be achieved if there is a positive program of organized and directed effort, but complete elimination is a very long-range problem, likely to take generations."

There is at present no "positive program of organized and directed effort" in our Military Government setup. Obviously a fundamental step would be a drastic improvement of

the German economy which would banish the all-pervading atmosphere of desperation and decay in which hatreds and resentments of every kind pullulate and multiply. Without this *sine qua non* of the German problem it is futile to teach the youth baseball and harangue their elders on the virtues of democracy and brotherhood.

The complete elimination of anti-Semitism would no doubt be too much to hope for even under an ideally managed occupation. But it ought not to be beyond our powers to arrange things so that a change takes place in the very young Germans who can still be salvaged. It would be well worth while, for instance, to effect a change in young Germans like the little girl who used to hang around the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg.

She was always in the crowd of children who waited for the Americans as they came out of the building, on the chance of receiving a piece of chocolate or cigarette for papa. The little girl, a shy and winning creature of about four, became the pet of one of the American officers. Time after time he singled her out for special favors, and she soon was able to spot him in any crowd. He never disappointed her, and was charmed that she came to recognize him so readily. One evening he accompanied his gift of a candy bar with the comment:

"So you know who I am now?"

She beamed happily up at him and nodded. "Ja," she said, "*ein dreckiger Jude*. . . ."